NUMB. CCCCLXVIII.

The SPECTATOR.

Erat Homo ingenioſus, acutus, acer, & qui plurimum & ſalis haberet & fellis, nec candoris minus. Plin. Epiſt.

Wedneſday, Auguſt 27. 1712.

MY Paper is in a Kind a Letter of News, but it regards rather what paſſes in the World of Converſation than that of Buſineſs. I am very ſorry that I have at preſent a Circumſtance before me, which is of very great Importance to all who have a Reliſh for Gayety, Wit, Mirth, or Humour; I mean the Death of poor *Dick Eaſtcourt*. I have been obliged to him for ſo many Hours of Jollity, that it is but a ſmall Recompence, tho' all I can give him, to paſs a Moment or two in Sadneſs for the Loſs of ſo agreeable a Man. Poor *Eaſtcourt!* the laſt Time I ſaw him, we were plotting to ſhew the Town his great Capacity for acting in its full Light, by introducing him as dictating to a Set of young Players, in what Manner to ſpeak this Sentence, and utter t'other Paſſion------ He had ſo exquiſite a Diſcerning of what was defective in any Object before him, that in an Inſtant he could ſhew you the ridiculous Side of what would paſs for beautiful and juſt, even to Men of no ill Judgment, before he had pointed at the Failure. He was no leſs ſkilful in the Knowledge of Beauty; and, I dare ſay, there is no one who knew him well, but can repeat more well-turned Compliments, as well as ſmart Repartees, of Mr. *Eaſtcourt's*, than of any other Man in *England*. This was eaſily to be obſerved in his inimitable Faculty of telling a Story, in which he would throw in natural and unexpected Incidents, to make his Court to one Part, and rally the other Part of the Company: Then he would vary the Uſage he gave them, according as he ſaw them bear kind or ſharp Language. He had the Knack to raiſe up a penſive Temper, and mortify an impertinently gay one, with the moſt agreeable Skill imaginable. There are a thouſand things which crowd into my Memory, which make me too much concerned to tell on about him. *Hamlet* holding up the Skull which the Grave-digger threw to him, with an Account that it was the Head of the King's Jeſter, falls into very pleaſing Reflections, and cries out to his Companion,

Alas, poor Yorick! *I knew him,* Horatio, *a Fellow of infinite Jeſt, of moſt excellent Fancy; he hath born me on his Back a thouſand times: And how abhorred my Imagination is now, my Gorge riſes at it. Here hung thoſe Lips that I have kiſs'd I know not how oft. Where be your Gibes now, your Gambols, your Songs, your Flaſhes of Merriment, that were wont to ſet the Table on a Roar: No one now to mock your own Jeerings, quite chop-fallen! Now get you to my Lady's Chamber, and tell her, Let her paint an Inch thick, to this Favour ſhe muſt come. Make her laugh at that.*

It is an Inſolence natural to the Wealthy, to affix, as much as in them lies, the Character of a Man to his Circumſtances. Thus it is ordinary with them to praiſe faintly the good Qualities of thoſe below them, and ſay it is very extraordinary in ſuch a Man as he is, or the like, when they are forced to acknowledge the Value of him whoſe Lowneſs upbraids their Exaltation. It is to this Humour only, that it is to be aſcribed, that a quick Wit in Converſation, a nice Judgment upon any Emergency that could ariſe, and a moſt blameleſs inoffenſive Behaviour, could not raiſe this Man above being received only upon the Foot of contributing to Mirth and Diverſion. But he was as eaſy under that Condition, as a Man of ſo excellent Talents was capable; and ſince they would have it, that to divert was his Buſineſs, he did it with all the ſeeming Alacrity imaginable, tho' it ſtung him to the Heart that it was his Buſineſs. Men of Senſe, who could taſte his Excellencies, were well ſatisfied to let him lead the Way in Converſation, and play after his own Manner; but Fools, who provoked him to Mimickry, found he had the Indignation to let it be at their Expence who called for it, and he would ſhew the Form of conceited heavy Fellows as Jeſts to the Company at their own Requeſt, in Revenge for interrupting him from being a Companion to put on the Character of a Jeſter.

What was peculiarly excellent in this memorable Companion, was, that in the Accounts he gave of Perſons and Sentiments, he did not only hit the Figure of their Faces and Manner of their Geſtures, but he would in his Narrations fall into their very Way of Thinking, and this when he recounted Paſſages, wherein Men of the beſt Wit were concerned, as well as ſuch wherein were repreſented Men of the loweſt Rank of Underſtanding. It is certainly as great an Inſtance of Self-love to a Weakneſs, to be impatient of being mimick'd, as any can be imagined. There were none but the Vain, the Formal, the Proud, or thoſe who were incapable of amending their Faults, that dreaded him; to others he was in the higheſt Degree pleaſing; and

I do

I do not know any Satisfaction of any indifferent Kind I ever tasted so much, as having got over an Impatience of seeing my self in the Air he could put me when I have displeased him. It is indeed to his exquisite Talent this way, more than any Philosophy I could read on the Subject, that my Person is very little of my Care; and it is indifferent to me what is said of my Shape, my Air, my Manner, my Speech, or my Address. It is to poor *Eastcourt* I chiefly owe, that I am arrived at the Happiness of thinking nothing a Diminution to me, but what argues a Depravity of my Will.

It has as much surpriz'd me as any thing in Nature, to have it frequently said, That he was not a good Player: But that must be owing to a Partiality for former Actors in the Parts in which he succeeded them, and judging by Comparison of what was liked before rather than by the Nature of the Thing. When a Man of his Wit and Smartness could put on an utter Absence of common Sense in his Face, as he did in the Character of *Bullfinch* in the *Northern Lass*, and an Air of insipid Cunning and Vivacity in the Character of *Pounce* in the *Tender Husband*, it is Folly to dispute his Capacity and Success, as he was an Actor.

Poor *Eastcourt!* let the Vain and Proud be at Rest; they will no more disturb their Admiration of their dear selves, and thou art no longer to drudge in raising the Mirth of Stupids, who know nothing of thy Merit, for thy Maintenance.

It is natural for the Generality of Mankind to run into Reflections upon our Mortality, when Disturbers of the World are laid at Rest, but to take no Notice when they who can please and divert are pulled from us: But for my Part, I cannot but think the Loss of such Talents as the Man of whom I am speaking was Master of, a more melancholy Instance of Mortality, than the Dissolution of Persons of never so high Characters in the World, whose Pretensions were that they were noisy and mischievous.

But I must grow more succinct, and, as a SPECTATOR, give an Account of this extraordinary Man, who, in his Way, never had an equal in any Age before him, or in that wherein he lived. I speak of him as a Companion, and a Man qualified for Conversation. His Fortune exposed him to an Obsequiousness towards the worst Sort of Company, but his excellent Qualities rendered him capable of making the best Figure in the most refin'd. I have been present with him among Men of the most delicate Taste a whole Night, and have known him (for he saw it was desired) keep the Discourse to himself the most Part of it, and maintain his good Humour with a Countenance, in a Language so delightful, without Offence to any Person or Thing upon Earth, still preserving the Distance his Circumstances obliged him to; I say, I have seen him do all this in such a charming Manner, that I am sure none of those I hint at will read this, without giving him some Sorrow for their abundant Mirth, and one Gush of Tears for so many Bursts of Laughter. I wish it were any Honour to the pleasant Creature's Memory, that my Eyes are too much suffused to let me go on---

It is a Felicity his Friends may rejoyce in, that he had his Senses, and used them as he ought to do, in his last Moments. It is remarkable, that his Judgment was in its calm Perfection to the utmost Article; for when his Wife, out of her Fondness, desired she might send for a certain illiterate Humourist, (whom he has accompanied in a thousand mirthful Moments, and whose Insolence makes Fools think he assumes from conscious Merit) he answered, *Do what you please, but he won't come near me.* Let poor *Eastcourt's* Negligence about this Message, convince the Unwary of a triumphant Empyrick's Ignorance and Inhumanity.

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